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Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8399th meeting

Wednesday, 14 November 2018, 11.15 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu	(China)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Vaverka
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2018/981)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2018/981)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Vlora Çitaku to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/981, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tanin.

Mr. Tanin: The members of the Security Council have before them the latest quarterly report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/981), and today I will share with them my assessment of the situation, as well as an overview of the recalibrated work priorities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

When I last briefed the Council in May (see S/PV.8254), the situation reflected a degree of uncertainty with regard to the prospects for decisive progress in the European Union (EU)-facilitated political dialogue. However, after leaders from Belgrade and Pristina met in June and July, prospects for renewed negotiations began to be explored. At the European Forum Alpbach in Austria in August, both sides advocated for a new framework for a comprehensive agreement, including the possibility of territorial exchange. The addition of that new dimension has generated new impetus, as well as apprehension, among political actors and the populations on both sides, as well as within the region and among the international community. Regardless of the underlying challenges and concerns, the discussion has opened space for debate and consideration. Last week in Brussels, President Vučić and President Thaçi met and confirmed their mutual intention to continue the dialogue and work towards a settlement, within the EU-facilitated process.

The political talks in Brussels took place against a situation still dominated by frequent adversarial actions on the ground, many of which carry real consequences for the populations. Actions that attempt to pre-empt agreement are not conducive to achieving political compromise. Whether on larger or smaller issues, one-sided actions carry the constant potential of influencing the situation on the ground.

I refer to a number of broad areas, including infrastructure, energy and the economy. Individuals continue to face challenges in exercising their basic rights, including the rights of freedom of movement, religious practice and equal access to economic opportunities. In a recent development, the announcement by the Kosovo Government that a 10 per cent tax would be imposed on Serbian and Bosnian goods further increased tensions between Pristina and Belgrade and created instability for business and people. The Government of Serbia denounced the measure as damaging to the normalization of relations and a violation of the Central European Free Trade Agreement.

I would like to underline that the much-needed reform of Kosovo's rule-of-law institutions has been undermined by ethnic tension and political agendas. The resignation of a Kosovo Special Prosecutor over alleged threats connected to the investigation of major cases led to public protests and harmed public confidence in the strength and impartiality of the justice system. Naturally, protecting the independence of the judiciary and fighting organized crime and corruption require continuous and strenuous effort, in Kosovo as well as everywhere else. The European Union and the United Nations continue to place resources at the disposal of the authorities to help in that difficult but essential endeavour.

The wider context of the political dialogue process between the parties may sometimes be overshadowed by this array of unresolved problems, posturing and jousting. The European perspective itself continues to provide a significant source of motivation for political leaders on both sides and, in doing so, helps promote continued peace and stability. Support and assistance from the European Union is essential to strengthen capacity across Kosovo's public institutions and, on 19 July, the European Commission took a momentous step in affirming that benchmarks had been met for Kosovo's road map on visa liberalization, proposing that the European Parliament and the European Council lift visa requirements and allow visa-free travel for residents of Kosovo.

With all the focus on possibilities for a new political compromise, let me underline that we should not fail to account for the advances made since April 2013 and the central tenets of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations signed at that time, including the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities. Those tenets and their full implementation are crucial to progress on the ground.

The Assembly of Kosovo's recent approval of three draft laws on the Kosovo Security Force, aimed at significantly enhance the strength and responsibilities of the Force, has caused renewed tensions. The matter needs to be handled with the utmost care to ensure that the steps taken are the result of a fully inclusive, fully representative political process that respects the relevant legal frameworks.

Any political negotiation process, if it is to succeed, requires the full engagement and buy-in of societies, as well as leaders and political representatives. Top-level commitments that may be reached via political negotiations, no matter the strength of international and regional support, are unlikely to stand unless they are backed by full understanding and confidence among communities and individuals across society. I am confident that leaders on both sides, as well as the facilitators of the dialogue, have that firmly in mind.

With that in mind, UNMIK continues to prioritize *trust-building in Kosovo, particularly at the grass-*roots level, whenever and wherever possible, in close cooperation with all international partners on the ground. I have set engagement, empowerment and creativity as core objectives of our interaction and work with Kosovo society.

As I previously highlighted to the Council, UNMIK has re-aligned its focus and priorities towards promoting longer-term reconciliation at multiple levels in Kosovo. Without societal reconciliation — involving people, communities and civil society — progress can falter, regardless of the best efforts and work of political stakeholders. Trust-building requires patience and persistence to raise and empower the voices of understanding and compassion that may help shape a future different from divisions and conflict.

Following the United Nations Kosovo Trust-Building Forum held in Ljubljana in May, we have worked systematically to identify, support and empower change-makers across Kosovo and facilitate the implementation of initiatives outlined by participants in the Forum. In collaboration with the United Nations Kosovo team and other international partners, UNMIK is focused on realizing the recommendations from the Trust-Building Forum, which include a number of concrete measures for this year and beyond. The action plan encompasses a series of important measures, ranging from involving all segments of Kosovo society in an informed debate about the future to influencing the agendas of local and international partners in the areas of intercommunity trust and cooperation.

Other key objectives of the Mission's ongoing work include promoting the use of innovative communication technologies to support constant interaction among all groups and communities across Kosovo and addressing outstanding issues within the framework of justice, human rights, the women and peace and security agenda and the youth, peace and security agenda. I would like to emphasise that the UNMIK strategic frameworks on women and youth represent a bold step towards supporting the empowerment of women and young people in Kosovo.

Those efforts are designed to encourage an environment conducive to peace and reconciliation, healing historical mistrust and building bridges of common interest among communities. That is fully in line with the Secretary-General's Action for *Peacekeeping initiative and may offer an important* example of how to tap into the potential of people and partnerships to create the necessary conditions for sustaining peace.

Our international partnerships remain vital in this effort. During the year, the Mission reinforced its functional collaboration with the EU Office, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Kosovo Force, the Council of Europe and other international presences, together with our core partners in the United Nations Kosovo team. Besides any regular consultations in Belgrade, Pristina and regional capitals, I have made particular efforts to share our perspective and experience with stakeholders in Europe and beyond.

In each of the areas of the Mission's recalibrated work, as I have described today, UNMIK is working in line with the core principles of the Secretary-General's reform agenda and the guidance of the Council. Our efforts are aimed at helping to boost the conditions for peaceful negotiation and societal reconciliation.

At the same time, we are working to remain at the forefront of understanding, help the Council and share our understanding and work with all partners in the service of a lasting peace. I thank the members of the Council for their continuing support.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Tanin for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Dačić.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I thank Secretary-General Guterres for his report (S/2018/981) and his Special Representative, Mr. Tanin, for his briefing. I also thank them for their dedication and hard work on the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), under resolution 1244 (1999). I commend China for including this meeting, in line with the established dynamic, on the agenda of the Security Council, as well as the Council members who support a continued consideration of this question.

In August, we did not have the regular meeting on UNMIK, and I cannot but express my displeasure at the decision of the United Kingdom not to include that item in the programme of work of the Security Council, with the explanation that the situation in Kosovo and Metohija was calm and nothing was happening on the ground. I take this opportunity to point out why that approach is wrong and why we consider that it is important at this moment that this topic remain high on the Council's agenda.

We spent more than three hours — the time it usually takes to hold a Security Council meeting — discussing if it was necessary to convene the meeting or not. An unnecessary adversarial atmosphere between Belgrade and Pristina was created, as was division among Security Council members. The adoption of the programme of work of the Security Council was called into question, which constitutes a situation that is certainly harmful for both the solution of that issue and the prevailing tone in this organ.

Membership of the Security Council, let me recall, is a great privilege and a great responsibility, and its members must do their best to safeguard international peace and security. For years, the United Nations and its Member States have spared no effort or time working to prevent conflicts, and we are all called upon to do what it takes to prevent, at the first sign, instability from metamorphosing into a conflict.

In this case, we are faced with a situation of a semi-resolved problem being neglected. The conflict is far behind us, but we are equally far from establishing a stable and safe situation that no longer merits the attention of this organ. To allege that this topic is less important at a time when extensive efforts are being made to find a durable and sustainable solution, with great support from important actors in the international community, is counterproductive, to say the least.

We continue to believe that agreement should be reached among Council members on how often this topic should be considered in the Security Council and that the question of frequency is not a technical matter. I recall that Serbia tried hard to make a contribution to achieving a solution by agreement, and we are ready to continue the discussion of that question with all interested parties in the same constructive spirit.

It is with regret that I note that no substantive, positive changes have taken place since the last meeting of the Security Council on this item (see S/PV.8254). More than 2,000 days have passed without the formation of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, which is the cornerstone of the Brussels Agreement; no conditions have been created for the return of 200,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs); the Specialist Chambers have not begun their work and almost a year has passed since the murder of Oliver Ivanović, while the perpetrator of that heinous

crime has not been found. None of that has happened, and one would be hard-pressed to say that what has been done has been positive. Resolutions of this organ have been grossly violated and new provocations and new incidents have occurred. Let me mention just a few.

The so-called Kosovo Assembly has adopted laws that will make it possible, for all practical purposes, for the Kosovo Security Force to transform into armed forces. The constant calls of the international community for caution and disregard for the interests of the Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija notwithstanding, the authorities in Pristina are resolved to form the armed forces. Serbia is categorically opposed to such unilateral acts, for it is evident that those forces would have all the attributes and competencies of a military, irrespective of what they might be named.

Let me recall that, under resolution 1244 (1999) and the Military Technical Agreement, the Kosovo Force (KFOR) is the only legal military formation in Kosovo and Metohija. At the same time, it is an important guarantor of the implementation of the Brussels Agreement and, in practical terms, the only guarantor of the security and survival of the Serbs, their property and their religious and cultural heritage. Let me point out that it is unacceptable that radical, far-reaching and unilateral decisions be taken at a time when of ongoing dialogue aimed at finding a solution, and I expect the Security Council members to condemn Pristina's decision in that regard.

During his visit to Kosovo and Metohija on 8 and 9 September, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić was prevented from visiting the locality of Banja, in a Serbian enclave, because the Pristina authorities changed their initial decision at the last moment, regardless of his clear message of peace and calls for a sustainable solution for Kosovo and Metohija.

The raid by the special police forces of Gazivode reservoir was the most drastic example of provocation. Sixty members of the special Regional Operational Support Unit units, wearing balaclavas and wielding long-barrel guns, descended on Gazivode reservoir and hydroelectric plant in northern Kosovo and Metohija to enable Hashim Thaçi to make a visit. I am afraid that the only goal of that irrational action was to provoke and intimidate the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija, and not for the first time. That too, let me point out, was a clear violation of resolution 1244 (1999) and the Brussels Agreement.

As the First Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, I personally attended, along with Catherine Ashton, Hashim Thaçi and Aleksandar Vučić, a NATO meeting at the time of the signing of the Brussels Agreement in 2013, at which agreement was reached that no Kosovo security force could go to the north, unless two conditions were met: first, advice given to KFOR; and secondly, consent given by representatives of the Serbian municipalities in northern Kosovo and Metohija. Neither of those two occurred. We consider the KFOR and European Union (EU) reactions to have been inadequate and, to say the least, incongruent with their role and mandate. Escalation was avoided thanks to the calm prevailing on our side, the messages of the President of Serbia and the restraint of the Serbs in northern Kosovo and Metohija, who, although alarmed, demonstrated maturity and did not take the bait of provocation.

The message sent by the Gazivoda incident, however, is of particular concern. The reservoir and the hydroelectric plant are strategically important for both us and the Pristina side, yet Pristina is not ready to discuss substantive issues. The recent attempt to interfere with the work of Elektromreža Srbije, Serbia's power transmission network, and the intention of Pristina to take over the energy infrastructure in northern Kosovo and Metohija are also indicative in that regard. I recall that energy is a subject matter of the Brussels dialogue and that we have expressed our concern on a number of occasions over the steps Pristina has taken that threaten the energy stability of the entire region, despite its failure to fulfil its obligation to register two energy companies in northern Kosovo and Metohija.

Allow me to say that, according to the Brussels Agreement, the formation of the association/community of Serb-majority is important. What kind of dialogue are we talking about if, 2,000 days after the signing of the Brussels Agreement and the commitments to the European Union contained therein were undertaken by Pristina, none has been fulfilled, including the formation of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities? That association, of course, should be the basis for the formation of the aforementioned energy companies and for further discussion of the topic of energy.

Other developments also took place within the two previous reporting periods. The Pristina authorities decided to build a road through the special protected zone of the Visoki Dečani monastery, built in the

fourteenth century and included on the UNESCO World Heritage List, and sent bulldozers to its courtyard. Someone wrote "HH" on the gates of the monastery. That is the kind of conditions that the cultural heritage of Serbs must endure in Kosovo and Metohija. I take this opportunity to thank international representatives who prevented such unfortunate action by their timely intervention.

Attacks on Serbs and their property have occurred once again, including against those en route to the graveyards of their relatives, as well as against children in a playground. Unlike the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/961), that of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission in Kosovo registers 173 incidents involving members of non-Albanian communities from January to June alone, and says that the overall number of incidents rose by almost 20 per cent compared to the previous six months.

These are only some of the incidents that threaten security in Kosovo and Metohija and burden its already complex situation. I have to admit that I do not understand how this situation can be characterized as stable by anybody. Perhaps a "stable situation" implies that Serbs are fair game, that attacks on them are normal, that they do and will occur, and that they do not merit attention or response.

I would remind Council members that many of these attacks are directed at IDPs and returnees. How are we to expect even a modicum of progress to take place in the process of IDP returns if, in the Europe of the twenty-first century, we continue to recognize that the security situation is still the biggest challenge as the returnees continue to be targets of ethnically motivated attacks? Arbitrary arrests — that is, arrests of returnees on trumped-up charges — physical assaults and injuries, the stoning of the faithful and assaults on priests, the destruction of property, disturbing graffiti, the desecration of memorial plaques, national and religious hatred, the destruction of graveyards, provocations, institutional discrimination, the absence of the rule of law and an independent judiciary, drawn-out procedures, inadequate protection of evidence and witnesses, failure to enforce court decisions and other injustices are among the obstacles encountered these days by those attempting to return home. The latest report of the Secretary-General fails to refer to the approximately 200,000 IDPs who — according to a report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees — have waited 19 years but still do not enjoy their rights because of these unacceptable practices.

The assertions regarding stability are most certainly undercut as well by the number of foreign terrorist fighters from Kosovo, concerning which the Secretary-General also expresses concern in his report. Reports that one group planned to carry out terrorist attacks in Serbian majority communities and on KFOR are particularly alarming.

Another important and sensitive topic is the question of sexual violence in conflict. Serbia condemns most strongly such horrific acts of violence and believes that all perpetrators must be punished and that victims should be provided with appropriate protection and help. The number of victims of sexual violence in conflict does not diminish the dreadful effect of such violence on each individual victim, just as speculation about numbers does not help justice, leads to politicization and slows down the process of reconciliation in post-conflict societies.

The information contained in the report and based on the data of the Commission for the Verification and Recognition of Sexual Violence Victim Status in Kosovo — according to which, out of 782 complaints, only 137 have been accepted — is indicative of the years-long practice by Pristina of presenting falsehoods to the Security Council and continually invoking the World Health Organization (WHO), even though that agency does not possess any such data. I have submitted requests to the WHO, which has confirmed that it does not have any such information. At these meetings of the Council, we have heard repeated allegations of the existence of 20,000 victims of sexual violence, on the basis of which attempts have been made to establish a hierarchy of victims based on ethnic, religious or other attachments. It is almost as if Serbian victims were less important and that sexual violence against Serbian nationals were justified and unpunishable.

In this atmosphere of the justification of crimes against Serbs, it was possible for the so-called Government of Kosovo to nominate Fatmir Limaj as chief of the negotiating team in the dialogue with Belgrade. As a commander in the Kosovo Liberation Army, he raped and killed, according to the testimony of Albanians themselves, the Mazreku brothers, witnesses and accomplices to the crime, and a number of Serbian women in the village of Klecka. That is the man dispatched as head of the team to negotiate with Serbia.

I reiterate that Serbia believes that these issues must be addressed without politicization and with respect for each and every victim, and of course with recourse to the truth and the facts concerning all parties to the war.

On this occasion, I cannot fail to mention the letter addressed to the Secretary-General by the departing United States Ambassador to the United Nations, urging him to initiate a strategic review of UNMIK and to develop an exit strategy from Kosovo. We have heard again and again at these meetings that UNMIK has fulfilled its mandate and that it is no longer needed, in light of the fact that the so-called Kosovo has built democratic institutions and that the rule of law and human rights are being respected. I must once again put the following questions to all those who have made these arguments.

Do they accept that democratic institutions do not carry out the agreements and obligations they have undertaken? The Brussels agreement was signed but has not been implemented by Pristina. Do they believe that democracy is served when tear-gas grenades are lobbed in Parliament, as we have seen occur in Pristina for years now? Is it evidence of the rule of law when, every now and then, Pristina pardons criminals sentenced for the most heinous criminal offences, including members of the Drenica Group? Can the intimidation of returnees, attacks on members of minority communities and daily discrimination against them be accepted as a normal state of affairs? Has the desired standard of respect for human rights been achieved by the return of a mere 1.9 per cent of IDPs? Is that a sufficient number to warrant giving up on further returns? Does that mean that the expulsion of 200,000 Serbs is done and dusted? Are we supposed not to mention it any more? Whatever happened to over 1,500 missing Serbs? We keep hearing such insinuations from other parties, as if Serbian victims were less important.

For some, this is an uncomfortable yet undeniable truth. Almost everyone sitting at this table supports the international presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the general situation cannot be compared to that of Kosovo and Metohija and where we can all agree that the security of citizens is not threatened. Why is the international presence needed in Bosnia and Herzegovina but not in Kosovo and Metohija? Why have some Council members not raised the issue of removing the international presence from Bosnia and Herzegovina, as they have with respect to Kosovo? I can agree that the situation in Kosovo is significantly different than it was in 1999 or 2009, but the Mission is also different from what it was at that time. To allege, however, that the Mission is not needed and that it has fulfilled its purpose is far from reality. Considering that this organ is responsible for the UNMIK mandate, I would like to ask on this occasion whether and what the Secretary-General replied to Ambassador Haley.

Some Council members are of the view that the status of Kosovo is a finished story; at the same time, many think that it is not. Many States are now reconsidering their decision to recognize the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo and, to date, 10 States have changed that decision. They have revoked their recognition or suspended it. They realized that they had not been sufficiently informed of the situation and thought that it was necessary to give dialogue a chance and that everyone would respect the outcome of the dialogue. That number could soon rise significantly and the number of those that have recognized the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo could fall below one half of the United Nations membership. Decisions to withdraw such recognition are condemned by Pristina and some States, while Serbia's petitions are disqualified as provocations. Conversely, for such States Pristina's lobbying for new recognitions is a legitimate exercise, not a provocation. For them, calls to disrespect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a full-fledged State Member of the United Nations heard from some countries — and which I am sure we will hear at today's meeting, since they always do so in my presence — will openly appeal to other countries to recognize Kosovo. What does that mean? They can lobby countries to recognize Kosovo, whereas Serbia may not call on countries to withdraw such recognition. It seems that something is very wrong in that reasoning.

In desperation, last week Pristina increased its tariffs on goods from Serbia by 10 per cent to punish my country for how it was conducting its foreign policy. It did so in breach of the rules and regulations of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), which it currently chairs, and had such an action strongly condemned by all international actors, including the European Union. Serbia agreed for Kosovo to take part in the regional initiative. Serbia was asked to do so, and it did so, and now Kosovo is not respecting CEFTA, which it chairs. It is interesting that even Hashim Thaçi himself disagrees with that decision of the Pristina

authorities. The policy is therefore not clear to me. We have good and bad policemen in Kosovo.

Instead on dialogue, Pristina is focusing on attempts to become a member of international organizations in the mistaken belief that it will thereby prove its statehood, refusing to accept that such attempts are disruptive to any solution whatsoever. However, the lack of grounds for its applications and their inconsistency with the basic principles of international law are conducive to the politicization of those organizations, their division and an unnecessary waste of energy.

In that connection, let me give one clear example: the application of so-called Kosovo to become a member of INTERPOL. The argument to which Pristina often resorts is that it cannot cooperate with INTERPOL because it is not a member. That falsehood is exposed by the assertion in the Secretary-General's report that we are considering today, which states that UNMIK continues to ensure communication between the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina and INTERPOL. Under the memorandum of understanding between INTERPOL and UNMIK, such cooperation has continued for more than 15 years. In fact, Pristina's campaign, openly aided and abetted by some States, whereby certain countries overtly take part in lobbying and calling on other countries to recognize Kosovo in international organizations and to vote for it, seeks to present so-called Kosovo's membership of INTERPOL as a matter of security and combating crime. That is unsubstantiated and unacceptable. It is quite obvious that there are political aspirations involved. Pristina does not want to join INTERPOL in order to combat crime but to present itself as an independent country. On the other hand, that is why we always say that every country should bear in mind that such issues have an inherent status. They are not specialist issues. Pristina did not bother to extradite Gülen's supporters to Turkey within 24 hours. It did not matter to it that it was not a member of INTERPOL. We are talking about Kosovo's attempt to misuse that organization to try and enter by the back door in order to prejudge the outcome.

The circumstances may have made the thrust of my statement sound sombre and negative. However, I would like to conclude on a positive note. At the recent Security Council open debate on strengthening multilateralism, the observer of the European Union pointed out, inter alia, that we have learned that sustainable peace always requires a negotiated political solution (see S/PV.8395). Among other matters, the Security Council often discusses that and calls on other countries to first reach a solution on external issues and then for the rest of the countries to consider the situation. As I recall, President Obama also called on all countries not to recognize Palestine until it reached an agreement with Israel. However, in the case of Serbia many countries did the opposite. Serbia could not agree more and earnestly seeks to achieve a compromise on the question of Kosovo and Metohija. We are committed to finding a mutually acceptable solution. Such a solution cannot be found without agreement between Belgrade and Pristina, just as it is not possible without the Security Council's support.

To that end, I once again call on the Security Council to help that process and to use the momentum to move forward. The divisions within the Security Council on the issue and the discussions as to whether we need UNMIK or not clearly do not help. The answer as to whether we need Security Council meetings and UNMIK will be found once we find a mutually acceptable solution. Until then, we have resolution 1244 (1999), adopted by this organ, with which we all must comply. For its part, Serbia will make the utmost effort to continue the dialogue and to reach a lasting solution that respects the interests of both the Serbian and the Albanian peoples. Let us strive to seek a compromise for the future, a lasting peace between Serbs and Albanians, the prosperity of both Serbs and Albanians and peace and stability in the entire region. Once that happens, we will not need either UNMIK or Security Council meetings on the issue.

In conclusion, we have recently been marking the centenary of the end of the First World War, in which Serbia fought on the side of the allies. Serbia paid for the great victory with many casualties. According to data from the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, Serbia lost 1,247,435 people. That is 28 per cent of its population and 62 per cent of its male population aged between 18 and 55 years old. Of those killed, 845,000 were civilians. Almost every tenth victim of the First World War was Serbian. To honour those Serbian victims of the First World War, the former President of the United States Woodrow Wilson took the decision to fly the Serbian flag over the White House and all United States national institutions on 28 June 1918. A similar decision was only ever repeated once in the history of the United States, when it decided to do the same with the French flag some years later. That is why peace and

stability in the region are among Serbia's priorities: so that the victims are never forgotten and to avoid another war in the future.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to Ms. Çitaku.

Ms. Çitaku: It is a great honour to be here in the Chamber today to represent the youngest democracy in South-Eastern Europe. We are gathered here only days after we all commemorated the centennial of the end of the First World War. As the stories of the few remaining witnesses to that dark chapter of human history recently reminded us, a steep price has been paid for freedom and peace in our old continent. The aftermath of the Great War also reminds us that peace is not sustainable unless it is complemented by justice. It is no coincidence that, before the dust of that terrible war had settled, our continent was hit yet again by a peril of unprecedented proportions in the form of the Second World War, causing a staggering loss of human life.

While the nations of the Western Balkans were occasional protagonists of that conflict, more often than not we were a battleground — a stage where ideals clashed, nations brawled, lives were cut short and dreams were gutted. Following the Second World War, a most unfortunate course of events would lead our region and my dear country, Kosovo, to become the arena of the last war on the European continent. That is a war that I remember all too well. I was among the 1 million Kosovar-Albanians who were displaced and forced out of our homes as part of the ethnic cleansing campaign carried out by the Serbian military forces. One million refugees were scattered, twenty thousand women raped and tens of thousands killed. Many are still missing.

The wounds of war cannot be healed easily, especially when the aggressor — the Serbian State — continues to refuse to take responsibility for its actions. Does anyone believe that peace in Europe would have been possible if the perpetrators of the First and Second World Wars had not been held accountable for what transpired? Can anyone seriously contend that it would have been possible for the world to move on if the instigators of those wars had insisted on moral parity? There was no moral parity in the First World War, or in the Second. There is no moral parity in the Kosovo war either. There is an oppressor and the oppressed, and we are all acutely aware of who the oppressor is.

Unfortunately, the President of Serbian only recently visited Kosovo. Instead of using the visit to send messages of peace, the Serbian President praised Milošević — the person in charge of instigating the most terrible tragedies in Europe since the World Wars. Yet we Kosovars refuse to be defined by our painful past alone. Instead, we choose to identify ourselves with our capacity to build a better future. We are not yesterday's victims; we are today's champions. We are the nation of Majlinda Kelmendi, Distria Krasniqi and all of the young women who have elevated Kosovo to the highest pedestals of the Olympics by relying solely on their own abilities.

We are a nation of youngsters who refuse to accept failure, who, when given the chance to perform, raise the bar for everyone else. We are a young republic that has been recognized by the majority of the free nations of the world. We are relentless and resolute in repelling every desperate attempt by our northern neighbour to undo our accomplishments. And should they try, they will undoubtedly fail.

Kosovo is its own entity and the President of Kosovo has the legitimate right to visit any part of Kosovo without asking for permission from anyone. There was no incident on the day President Thaçi visited Lake Ujman. As the Kosovo Force confirmed, the incident unfortunately occurred the day after, when the Serbian bar owner who offered coffees to the President and his team was attacked with a bomb by Serbian parallel structures from the north.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank all of the Caribbean countries that have reconfirmed their recognition of Kosovo's independence and sovereignty. On behalf of the people of Kosovo, I also want to humbly express our gratitude to each and every delegation sitting around this table for everything they have done for the people of Kosovo. Dozens of statements and resolutions adopted in this Chamber have made Kosovo a better place, and the Council was our voice in our darkest hour of need.

However, we need to acknowledge that the world has since changed. Kosovo has changed. It is no longer 1999; it is 2018. Kosovo has moved on and it is long overdue for the Council to do the same on the matter of Kosovo. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is not a peacekeeping mission anymore, and it is certainly not an administrative mission. The most instructive

illustration of the point that I am trying to make and convey is resolution 1244 (1999) itself. I urge members of the Council to go back and read it again. Read it and the Council will be baffled to find that it refers to an alternate reality, a world that ceased to exist a long time ago. Kosovars as a people have been on the receiving end of the United Nations helping hand. We believe that the Organization's resources can be put to much better use in offering solutions to more troubling problems and crises around the world.

As far as Kosovo is concerned, I implore the Council to consult the ruling of the International Court of Justice, which, I might add, was written upon the request of none other than Serbia itself. The ruling is precise and unambiguous. It states that Kosovo did not break any international laws when it declared its independence one decade ago. Those facts and realities are indisputable and irreversible. They will not change now or ever. Kosovo is independent, and it is here to stay, now and forever.

These meetings do not help peace. These meetings do not help dialogue. Unfortunately, this Chamber is being misused. It is being turned into a theatre, a platform to fuel our own domestic audiences. It is being used and misused for our own domestic audiences, and we should not allow that.

Kosovo has undergone a process of painful growth through which it has come to realize that independence is not sufficient in and of itself. While we rejoice and take immense pride in the individual accomplishments of our champions in sports, the arts and science, our institutions have a long way to go in order to meet the rightful expectations of the Kosovar people. Our Government must do much more to provide higher quality education, better welfare and more opportunities for its people. It must also go the extra mile in combating corruption, nepotism and other negative phenomena that plague our young republic.

However, while some battles are ours to fight internally, we will be able to meet other challenges only if we are completely integrated into the global community. Kosovo cannot be expected to effectively battle transnational crime if it is not part of INTERPOL. Kosovo cannot, and should not, be a black hole in the middle of the European continent. We are prepared and willing to help make not only Kosovo, but our entire region and Europe at large, safer for its inhabitants. The Kosovo Police Force — and here the United Nations should take pride because it helped us to establish it, 19 years ago — meets all the conceivable criteria for a credible partner in the fight against transnational crime. It has already helped foil international terrorist plots and curtail violent extremist groups. It has also signed over 80 bilateral agreements of cooperation with counterpart law enforcement agencies around the world.

However, in order to become a proper contributor to regional and global security, Kosovo must become a member of INTERPOL. That is what membership is about. Frankly speaking, I do not know how on Earth such an outcome would be a loss for our neighbour. I really do not know. The matter is not a zero-sum game; it is quite the opposite, actually. In this day and age, it is irresponsible to pretend that our nations are not deeply affected by what happens beyond our borders. We should view our growing interconnectedness as a reason to increase cooperation. The fact of the matter is that those who obstruct Kosovo's membership in INTERPOL are implicitly aiding organized crime. It is evident that the only parties who stand to benefit from keeping Kosovo out of INTERPOL are criminals, drug cartels and terrorists. The question that must be asked is: do we really want to be on that list?

The same principle applies to the establishment of Kosovo's armed forces. First and foremost, I must emphasize that Kosovo has not engaged in building an army with the intention of threatening to fight or invade any land. That is not something we do. We are actually transforming the mandate of our existing security forces in order to make them compatible to contribute to regional and global security to the full extent of their potential. Our soldiers and officers have excelled in every single international competition that they have participated in, proving that they are ready to give back. Moreover, we are proud to have the second most diverse security force relative to all NATO members. In Kosovo we perceive our diversity as a source of strength. It is an attribute that we cherish and want to preserve. Hence it is a matter of concern to see Serbian members of the Kosovo Security Force be subjected to intense campaigns of intimidation, which are not limited to the members themselves but affect their families as well. The Serbian State and its proxies have left no stone unturned in their endeavour to stop the process of the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force.

But let me be clear: no State other than Kosovo, no other citizens than those of Kosovo, have veto power over the establishment of our armed forces. The issue is a matter of sovereign decision, one which Kosovo shall conclude soon. And again, allow me to be completely candid: the matter is not something on which we will ever have a dialogue with Serbia. Also, as the Council is well aware, the decision is in no way a violation of resolution 1244 (1999).

While we are on the topic of the dialogue, I feel it is necessary for me to reiterate, on behalf of the Government of Kosovo, that our country remains committed to fulfilling all the arrangements previously agreed to in Brussels with Serbia. However, as the expression goes, it takes two to tango, and Serbia is not holding up its end of the bargain. It has consistently failed to deliver on almost everything that we have agreed upon, from its disregard for the energy agreement, which is costing Kosovo millions on an annual basis, to its unwillingness to recognize Kosovar diplomats, and many other matters that are hindering normal interactions for citizens in both our countries. Furthermore, Serbia has been in violent breach of the Central European Free Trade Agreement with Kosovo, dumping its products in order to destabilize our markets. As such, Kosovo's imposition of a 10 per cent tariff on Serbian products was unavoidable. It is both an economically and a politically sensible measure. Our Minister for Trade and Industry has sent dozens of letters to his counterparts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Serbia, letters that were never answered.

That of course brings us back to the necessity of dialogue with Serbia. We all agree that dialogue is the only path forward for our two countries. Nonetheless, it is crucial for us to also agree on what that dialogue is, and what it will never be about. That dialogue is not about debating Kosovo's right to exist as a free nation under the sun; rather, it is principally and exclusively about peace, reconciliation and mutual recognition. As such, the dialogue will have meaning and produce results only if we decide to speak in earnest with our own domestic audiences about the process in Brussels. Beyond the agreements and papers signed, it is essential that our neighbours begin to treat us as human beings, equal in every dimension and endowed with the same inalienable rights and freedoms.

Dialogue is very important, but we in Pristina are the ones who decide. We — not people in Belgrade — decide who represents us. We are proud that we represent the generation that fought Slobodan Milošević. Fatmir Limaj was acquitted twice by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, at The Hague. And we in Kosovo can look back very calmly at our own past and not be ashamed of it.

Just two months ago, an 18-year-old boy from Kosovo was beaten and hospitalized in Serbia because someone on the streets of Serbia heard him speak the Albanian language on the phone. Thankfully, that time he survived. Not long ago, an infant — a baby — was about to die because Serbian air traffic control refused to grant a permit for the use of its airspace to a plane that was due to land in Pristina. Indulge me for a moment and think about this — Serbian air traffic control officials refused to grant a permit for the use of airspace to a plane because it was headed for Pristina, even when it could have saved a baby's life. That behaviour is beyond comprehension. In another instance, dozens of buses carrying Kosovo Albanians were attacked with stones as they passed through Serbia because Kosovo was their destination. Another case in point is the Kosovar artists and scholars who are banned from entering Serbia in the first place, even though the purpose of their travel to Belgrade is to promote peace and dialogue. Such issues transcend politics. However, they are exceptionally more hurtful when the State is complicit. An innocent infant was about to die in the sky in September because Serbian authorities refused to grant a simple request by an international aircraft operator.

We can agree or disagree on various and numerous counts, but we cannot and will not discuss placing a price tag on human life. There are no circumstances that can justify that horrendous notion becoming the subject of negotiation. In fact, it is shameful that a European Union candidate country is utilizing such despicable tools to make a political point. An agreement between States can be meaningful and sustainable only if it is an agreement between people that brings about more secure peace and better living standards for those involved — not if it triggers the opposite outcome. Our northern neighbours may have their doubts. However, we in Kosovo know exactly where we stand, where we are headed and where we belong — in Europe. We are reminded of that every day by our brave and courageous journalists who work fiercely to hold our politicians to account. We are constantly reminded of that by our athletes, men and in particular, women, who defy the odds and bring gold medals back home. We are reminded of that by our vibrant youth who excel

in science and technology, explore new frontiers and experiment with cutting-edge innovations to find answers to the questions of the future.

We are reminded of that by brave women like Vasfije Krasniqi. Vasfije was only 16 years old when she was taken from the arms of her mother by Serbian military forces in the spring of 1999. She was raped. They did not kill her because, as she herself has testified, they explicitly told her "you will all suffer more if we keep you alive". Little did they know that Vasfije would grow up to become an incredible woman, a mother of two beautiful daughters, and nearly two decades later she would return home stronger and braver than ever to teach all of us a lesson about justice. That lesson is about the justice that was once denied to her. It is a lesson of perseverance — about never giving up. Despite the best efforts to make Vasfije a victim, she is not one. She is a hero. And heroes like her define my country. The lessons of war still speak to us, reminding us that progress must never be taken for granted. Kosovo has borne witness to the worst of humankind. We live in the absence of justice for the dead, the wounded, the raped and the missing. Remorse cannot do justice to such suffering. We believe that every act of aggression, terror, cruelty and oppression must have repercussions, for hatred shall never prevail.

As Kosovars, we have a responsibility to do better. We are determined to honour the lives that might have been by ensuring that their sacrifice was not made in vain. Their memory has fuelled our transformation and empowered our sense of purpose. They have inspired our collective commitment to realizing the dreams of the fallen and our persistent efforts to pursue a future of enduring peace and prosperity. We know that those ideals are not easy to achieve, but they are nonetheless worth striving for. However daunting the odds may be and however big the challenges may seem, everyone can rest assured that Kosovo will never give up. We are a young republic, one that is far from perfect, but also one that will not stop striving to become better for all its citizens, regardless of their ethnic or religious background. Because that is how we keep our promise to our children. That is the Kosovo we are fighting for.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, for his comprehensive update on the reporting period based on the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/981).

The current state of affairs in Kosovo requires the continued attention of the Security Council as a matter on its current agenda. Our priorities in that regard should be to continue promoting dialogue between the parties, as well as confidence-building measures in the political-military, socioeconomic and human dimensions, in compliance with resolution 1244 (1999) and under the auspices of the European Union (EU) and with the involvement of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other relevant regional organizations to maintain comprehensive and sustainable security and development in Kosovo. In that regard, Astana supports the initiatives and concerted efforts of the global community, including the United Nations, the OSCE and the EU, aimed at achieving mutually acceptable conditions for resolving the situation in Kosovo. We consider it important for the parties to adhere to the agreements previously reached through the mediation of international organizations. Kazakhstan commends the steps by Belgrade and Pristina under the auspices of the European Union High Representative Federica Mogherini for continuing dialogue by holding a series of technical-level meetings in Brussels. We positively note that both leaders met in person in Brussels on 8 November.

At the same time, taking note of the 29 September incident related to the Gazivode reservoir, we strongly believe that both parties should avoid any steps leading to further tensions and instability. Kazakhstan also considers it highly important to thoroughly study the issue of border delineation, which was reintroduced by both leaders of the two parties as part of their continued efforts to reach a comprehensive agreement on the normalization of relations, as it has the potential to bring about a negative effect on existing peace and stability in the region.

There are still a number of sensitive issues left to be resolved, such as the lack of inter-community trust and a large number of persons still missing. Of equal critical importance is the protection of vulnerable groups, including the Roma and the Ashkalija, and the cultural heritage and diversity in Kosovo. To that end, Kazakhstan calls both parties to strengthen their political will to further normalize relations between Belgrade and Pristina.

Without neglecting the importance of a political settlement of the situation in Kosovo, we consider it instrumental to tackle the issue through the nexus of security and development leading to sustainable socio-economic recovery of Kosovo. In that vein, there is a need to implement resolution 2250 (2015), on youth, peace and security, and provide full support and access to the youth of all ethnicities to education and skills-development to fulfil their potential, as young people are a key determinant in preventing conflicts and a vital driver of future peace and development in the region.

In addition, we need to pay special attention to the implementation of the resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, and subsequent resolutions for enhancing gender equality and empowerment. Our delegation welcomes the efforts of UN-Women and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in promoting social stability in the region, which can be achieved only with the full engagement of the United Nations country team, regional organizations and civil society groups working towards peacebuilding and conflict prevention and mediation in Kosovo. We note the positive work of UNMIK on the question of returning refugees and displaced persons, together with their resettlement. We call to strengthen the international work on the matter.

We believe that peace and stability in this part of the world will be achieved only if the parties continue to fulfil their commitment in the good spirit of mutual respect, understanding and compromise. To that end, Kazakhstan firmly believes that long-lasting peace and stability in Kosovo could be achieved if the parties follow agreements, while focusing on promoting inter-community dialogue and trust, mutual respect and understanding.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): Let me thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing and for all the good work he and his team continue to do in Kosovo and the region. I also welcome His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Serbia and Her Excellency the Kosovo Ambassador to Washington, D.C.

We fully support the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) and recognize the important role that UNMIK has played in post-conflict stabilization and reconciliation. The situation in Kosovo has indeed changed dramatically since the Mission's inception, two decades ago. We believe the Security Council needs to use its resources effectively. It needs to refocus UNMIK's efforts so that the means deployed by the United Nations are tailored fully to the situation on the ground. To that end, the United Kingdom supports and looks forward to a strategic review of the Mission. I would recall for members that the European Union (EU) and other regional organizations are also very closely involved in Kosovo and in the region. The EU's role is vital to enabling true peace, security and stability on the ground.

With the efficiency and priorities of the Council in mind, we welcome the reduction in frequency of UNMIK discussions. The Foreign Minister singled out my country, so I will take a few, brief minutes to respond. It is important that the cycle of discussion in the Council reflects reality on the ground. We all agreed on that at the point when we took the decision. It is also important that the reporting cycles of the Secretary-General reflect the frequency of the Council's discussion. But on the Foreign Minister's specific points, we offered four options to reach an agreement with his country — and all four were rejected. We also made it very clear that we would hold a meeting on Kosovo in the Security Council if there were progress on normalization. Sadly, there was no progress on normalization. Instead, I am sorry to say, the Serbian Government orchestrated a protest outside our Embassy in Belgrade, which is simply not an acceptable way of conducting diplomatic relations.

As we reflect on the progress Kosovo has made since UNMIK's installation in 1999, there is an example of how far Kosovo has moved forward that I would like to raise, and that concerns the Kosovo police. The Kosovo police is a professional organization that since its inception, in 1999, has taken responsibility for ensuring the maintenance of the rule of law in the long term. Its officers are well trained, and they are keen to cooperate internationally in our joint efforts to combat serious and organized crime and terrorism.

The United Kingdom hopes that the Kosovo police is voted into INTERPOL during its General Assembly session next week. We urge other members to support the Kosovo police bid. That is not about political point-scoring, it is about our collective security and fight against organized crime. Kosovo's inclusion would facilitate information-sharing among law enforcement in the Western Balkans and beyond, and that would enhance the stability of us all, including Serbia's. It

is time that we stop transnational organized criminals cooperating better than our own police services.

I would just like to add the point that I knew Oliver Ivanović and considered him a friend. We too hope that the perpetrators of his murder will be brought to justice. Oliver worked tirelessly to try to normalize the status of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. I think the greatest tribute that both countries could pay to Oliver would be to continue his work without conditions.

We continue to encourage both Serbia and Kosovo to make progress towards a sustainable solution through the EU-facilitated dialogue. We agree with both speakers that progress on the dialogue is vital for stability, security and prosperity in the two countries and the region. But I am sorry to say that this is not always the way in which dialogue is approached. We would like to see much more progress and faster, and we would like the two sides to always keep in mind that any proposals they put forward really do enhance stability on the ground and the safety and security of all their citizens.

We have had a number of rounds of dialogue in the past. In this century alone there was an attempt in 2006 under the auspices of the United Nations, to resolve the status issue that recommended Kosovo be independent. that was blocked. There was an attempt in 2007 among the EU, the United States and Russia to the same end. That too was blocked. Now we have the EU- facilitated dialogue. I cannot stress too strongly how important it is that that dialogue makes real progress if the region, and in particular Kosovo and Serbia, are to realize prosperity, security and stability.

The people of Kosovo and Serbia have elected their leaders to best represent their interests. We urge those leaders to do so. Provocative acts and rhetoric from both sides are deeply unhelpful and antagonistic and should be stopped. They are contrary to the spirit of normalization and they simply make finding common ground more difficult. We believe that both countries now need to focus on a deliverable and sustainable normalization agreement through the EU-facilitated dialogue, which enhances security and benefits the ordinary people of both countries. The United Kingdom stands ready to support such an agreement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's meeting of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and we share the serious concerns he has expressed about the situation in Kosovo. We once again listened attentively to Ms. Vlora Çitaku. We thank Special Representative Zahir Tanin and his team for their work and for his objective briefing on the activities of the Mission, which shows that the serious, deep-seated problems in Kosovo continue and require urgent solutions and the oversight of the international community.

We are not impressed by the rosy picture that some in this Chamber continue to paint in meeting after meeting. We have been compelled to conclude that the European Union (EU)-mediated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina remains mired in a deep conceptual crisis, as the lack of any tangible results from the contacts between the parties confirms. There is still no progress towards the ambitious declared goal of drafting a comprehensive agreement on the normalization of relations. The main flaw is that the key agreement reached previously on establishing an association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo is not being implemented. This is the sixth year since the signing of the document, but Pristina has been sabotaging the process while the Serbian side has consistently upheld all of its commitments. Some examples of that are the integration of Serbian judges and prosecutors into the Kosovo justice system, the inclusion of Serbian police officers in the north of the province in a Kosovo-wide structure and the allocation of a territorial dialling code for Kosovo.

We note the constructive position that Belgrade has taken and the efforts of the Serbian side to find mutually acceptable solutions. It seems, however, that Pristina is hoping that under pressure from outside, Serbia will recognize Kosovo's so-called independence. On top of that, its response to the Serbian leadership's recent compromise proposals came in the form of Kosovo-Albanian leaders' laying unilateral claim to large areas of southern Serbia. We want to point out that over and over again, Pristina makes provocative moves as soon as the possibility of resuming the negotiation process arises. The latest example is the Kosovo-Albanian authorities' recent imposition of a 10 per cent duty on goods from Serbia in defiance of existing agreements, including in the context of the Central European Free Trade Agreement. Moreover, it was achieved through Pristina's abuse of its function as Chair of the Agreement, which it participates in only indirectly,

through the Mission, as resolution 1244 (1999) strictly stipulates.

The situation in Kosovo is seriously worrying. In September alone, the province teetered on the brink of a relapse into conflict twice. That could have had disastrous consequences for the entire Balkan region. On 8 September, Kosovo Albanians took aggressive action in trying to prevent the passage of Serbia's President Aleksandar Vučić to a Serbian-populated village in northern Kosovo, while on 29 September, Kosovo's so-called President, Hashim Thaçi, visited the Gazivode reservoir without prior agreement with the leaders of the Serbian municipality of Zubin Potok. These were nothing but provocative acts that worsened the already extremely low level of trust in the region.

We are disappointed by the passivity of the various relevant international structures, particularly the Kosovo Force (KFOR), which is directly responsible for maintaining peace and security in the province. We also want to point out that the incursion by armed Kosovars into the north of the region was a direct violation of the agreements reached with the participation of NATO and the EU. We are particularly alarmed by Pristina's efforts to transform the Kosovo security forces into fully fledged armed forces with the support of the NATO countries in KFOR. We have repeatedly drawn the international community's attention to the fact that these little infringements are direct gross violations of resolution 1244 (1999), which stipulates that the only presence permitted in Kosovo is of multinational contingents under international control. The Kosovo-Albanian authorities are already announcing the deployment of one garrison of the future army to northern Kosovo, which is a direct route to conflict. We urge both Pristina and its international patrons to stop before it is too late.

The slow pace of the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to the region remains unsatisfactory. The daily attacks on Kosovo Serb homes and property and the cases of arson, physical damage and acts of vandalism continue. Ensuring the reliable protection of Orthodox structures in Kosovo needs especially careful attention. Kosovars' usurpation of Serbian Orthodox Church property continues, and in particular, the church of Saint John the Baptist and the Saint Paraskeva Pyatnitsa chapel in the town of Peć are no longer listed in the local land register as Serbian Orthodox Church property. There have been attempts to build illegally in UNESCO-protected areas near churches and monasteries. The international presence in Kosovo, particularly the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), must keep the situation in this area under control. In addition, the province is still a breeding ground for recruiting radicals. Any attempts to put that problem on the back burner could be very costly for the Balkans and for Europe as a whole, especially considering that terrorists fleeing Syria and Iraq are returning there.

We have to once again conclude that the Specialist Chambers for prosecuting crimes committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army insurgents has not begun its real work, although it has already appointed its third Prosecutor. This story looks more and more like a mockery aimed at winding up the investigation into the atrocities uncovered by the Council of Europe Special Rapporteur Dick Marty. All those guilty of serious crimes must be brought to justice and duly punished, regardless of the positions they hold. There has also been no progress in clarifying the circumstances surrounding the murder in January of the Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanović. We believe that has to do with the fact that despite Belgrade's legitimate demands, for some incomprehensible reason the investigation of the crime was handed over wholly to Pristina.

A solution to the Kosovo problem must be found by the parties themselves on the basis of our unanimously adopted resolution 1244 (1999). The final agreement must be reliable, with the proper international legal form, and must have the broad support of the international community. Despite our colleagues' assurances that they support the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, we continue to see attempts to push for Kosovo's membership in international organizations. In particular, major efforts are being made, including through financial leverage aimed at specific countries, to round up a few more votes in support of Kosovo's INTERPOL application. That is undermining the mutual trust between the parties even more and may have a destructive effect on INTERPOL's work, as happened before with the World Customs Organization.

It is clear to us that considering the serious problems in the province and the realities on the ground, the international community's attention to the situation in Kosovo must not be distracted. We deplore the fact that the quarterly meeting on Kosovo scheduled for August did not take place. I am obliged to respond to my British colleague, who told us about four options for holding a meeting on Kosovo in August. We have another reading

of that proposal, which is that our British colleagues, who presided over the Council in August, simply blew off the meeting altogether. We believe it is essential to maintain the quarterly Security Council meetings on Kosovo and specifically to hold them in an open format. It is also essential to maintain the budget and staffing parameters of UNMIK, which plays an important role in Kosovo as, essentially, the objective eyes and ears of the international community, as well as doing important work in the area of intercommunal reconciliation. We want to point out that the Security Council alone is authorized to make decisions about the fate of UNMIK, as provided for in resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank our former colleague Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his comprehensive briefing on the report of the Secretary-General on UNMIK (S/2018/981). I also reiterate our full support to him in carrying out his mandate. We highly value the vital role that the United Nations has played over the past years in helping Kosovo build its institutions and implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1244 (1999). I also welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Her Excellency Ms. Vlora Çitaku, Ambassador of Kosovo to the United States in Washington, D.C., and thank them for their statements. I will focus in my statement on political and security developments in Kosovo.

With regard to political developments, we welcome and support all the efforts and endeavours of the Republic of Kosovo to promote its stability, security, the rule of law, justice, development and the building of State institutions in the country. We also support its efforts to conduct dialogue with the European Union and achieve integration with it, as well as to implement all signed agreements between Kosovo and Serbia to reach permanent solutions to pending problems and establish good-neighbourly relations while attaining regional security and stability.

We commend the recent steps taken by Kosovo to achieve rapid and more consistent progress in the implementation of the European reform agenda. We also commend its full commitment to meeting its obligations under this agenda, especially that Kosovo has met all requirements to become part of the Schengen Zone, which was announced on 18 July by the Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship of the European Commission.

We urge Pristina and Belgrade to work together to finalize the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, as that is extremely important for building trust and confidence between both parties. The high-level European Union-facilitated dialogue in Brussels between Belgrade and Pristina remains the most appropriate framework for settling all outstanding issues. It is the principal means for reaching lasting, just and consensual solutions. We look forward to the work of both parties over the coming months with regard to adopting a legally binding agreement under international law to normalize relations between Belgrade and Pristina, in particular concerning the delineation agreement. We call for the inclusion of all social groups in that process.

With regard to security developments, we are concerned about renewed tensions between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Government of Kosovo caused by construction in the protected zone neighbouring the Visoki Dečani Monastery. We call on both parties to commit to the protection of religious heritage, and we stress the need to address such issues in line with the legislation and decisions of Kosovo's Implementation and Monitoring Council.

We note with concern the failure to reach any findings concerning the death of Kosovo-Serb politician Oliver Ivanović, on 16 January, which will prevent fostering trust among all communities across Kosovo. We look forward to seeing cooperation between both parties that will ensure the return of refugees, the recovery of their property, allocation of land to build houses, establishing security and providing social and economic opportunities — the absence of which will negatively affect sustainable return.

In conclusion, the international community must continue to make efforts to urge Pristina and Belgrade to overcome their differences in order to reach consensual, mutually acceptable, sustainable and just solutions leading to peace and stability in the region. UNMIK must continue its constructive work with Pristina, Belgrade and all parties in Kosovo to promote security, stability and respect for the human rights. Kosovo will need to make further efforts to strengthen the rule of law and end corruption and organized crime, as well as settle bilateral disputes and establish dialogue

between Belgrade and Pristina, while complying with the strategy of the European Commission on the Western Balkans.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): We thank Special Representative Tanin for his briefing. We appreciate his service and contributions to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We also thank Foreign Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku for being here today.

The United States applauds the leaders of Serbia and Kosovo for their expressions of commitment to normalization between their countries. We hope to see that normalization dialogue continue to intensify. Neither side should engage in any effort to undermine its legitimacy, including diplomatic recognition of the other side. That has no place in a genuine commitment to normalization.

Now is the time for both parties to be flexible in reaching compromises that both can agree to. The United States is committed to supporting the talks in whatever way possible. We will seriously consider any deal that is durable, implementable and sellable in both countries and that enhances stability. We urge Kosovo and Serbia to recognize the value of fully committing to normalization, which will bring great benefits to the people, the economy, the culture and peace and security of both countries. Mutual recognition and normalized relations between Kosovo and Serbia are the future. All sides will benefit from recognizing that reality and embracing it.

Considering the future of UNMIK, as we have noted many times before, we feel that the Mission has fulfilled its purpose and should draw down. We request that the Secretary-General and UNMIK initiate a strategic review to provide the members of the Security Council with critical information so that we can assess and evaluate the United Nations presence in Kosovo and ensure good stewardship of valuable United Nations Member States' time and resources. We also need to assess and develop a viable exit strategy for UNMIK. That is a principle that guides our approach to all other peacekeeping missions and should be possible with UNMIK, as well. The United States also supports the gradual transparent transition of the Kosovo Security Force into a multi-ethnic NATO interoperable military with a limited territorial defence mandate. The legislation pending before Kosovo's Assembly is fully in line with resolution 1244 (1999). It is the sovereign right of Kosovo to establish and maintain an armed force. That force, as planned, would contribute to regional and global security. We encourage all sides to avoid disinformation and provocative rhetoric about that legitimate, gradual multi-year transition.

The United States continues to encourage countries that have not yet done to join more than 110 other States Members of the United Nations in recognizing the reality of Kosovo's independence. We strongly support Kosovo's membership in all relevant international organizations, including the United Nations. We particularly encourage all INTERPOL members to support Kosovo's membership at that organization's general assembly on 20 November. Kosovo meets all membership criteria for INTERPOL. United Nations membership is not a requirement for joining INTERPOL.

Kosovo's membership in INTERPOL fundamentally is about enhancing the international law enforcement community's collective ability to combat terrorism, violent extremism, trafficking, cybercrime and other international criminal activity in the Balkan region and beyond. It is neither an impediment to the dialogue on normalization of relations nor in the international community's interest to postpone it until Serbia and Kosovo reach an agreement. UNMIK long ago ceased police functions in Kosovo. Having the Kosovo police — recognized by both Belgrade and Pristina as the sole law enforcement authority in Kosovo — join INTERPOL will no doubt strengthen international security. We urge all to support Kosovo on 20 November.

Finally, we reiterate our call on both sides to fully embrace normalization and support one another in all aspects of the enhanced relations that will come with it.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia thanks Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his informative briefing and work. We also welcome First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and thank him for his statement. We are also grateful to Ms. Çitaku for her statement.

Bolivia calls for compliance with resolution 1244 (1999), including respect for the sovereignty, the territorial integrity and the independence of the Republic of Serbia. It is in that regard, and pursuant

to the resolution, that we call on all political actors to work towards an agreement in this framework, support initiatives of this kind and refrain from using provocative rhetoric. Such language is nothing but detrimental to a future agreement between Belgrade and Pristina and erodes the efforts already undertaken to build trust between the parties.

In the same vein, the creation of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, agreed upon in the Brussels Agreement more than four years ago, must be re-established in accordance with that Agreement. Although progress was made in terms of the draft statute, we are concerned that both parties maintain opposing positions regarding the powers and competencies of the association/community. We regret that this situation continues, and we urge the Kosovo authorities to respect the Agreement and to move forward on this matter in order to ensure the security and rights of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija. Similarly, we call on them to refrain from any attempt to transform the Kosovo Security Force into an armed force, as doing so would constitute an act contrary to resolution 1244 (1999) and international law.

We also hope that the Kosovo authorities will fulfil their responsibilities and obligations as concerns the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and the Office of the Specialist Prosecutor. We reiterate that the rule of law and its impartial application is essential to combat impunity. The persons responsible for the commission of war crimes must be held accountable for their actions, regardless of their status or background.

We also reiterate our concern about the slow progress in the investigation into the assassination of Mr. Oliver Ivanović, leader of the Civic Initiative "Freedom, Democracy, Justice". We call on the competent authorities to work on the investigation of the events that culminated in the killing of that Kosovo Serb politician on 16 January.

Bolivia takes note of the efforts by the European Union and the mediation of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to make headway in the implementation of the existing agreements. We commend her recent outreach to the parties and we appreciate that they are willing to come to a binding agreement in line with international law. It is crucial that the parties comply with the commitments entered into and, in this context, we call on the parties to work for a peaceful solution through dialogue and in line with the obligation to negotiate, as stipulated by international law.

We appreciate the work carried out by UNMIK in accordance with its mandate in the context of resolution 1244 (1999), especially its efforts in fostering intercommunity confidence-building, the rule of law and human rights. Along the same lines, we welcome the convening of the United Nations Kosovo Trust-Building Forum in Ljubljana in May and hope that the resulting recommendations will be implemented in line with the commitments assumed by the Kosovo authorities.

We also commend the work that UNMIK continues to conduct with respect to gender equality in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000). We value its joint work with the municipal authorities and representatives of the province of Kosovo to protect communities' rights, strengthen the rule of law and facilitate the return of internally displaced persons, as well as its work providing document certification services. We encourage UNMIK to continue that work.

Finally, we are concerned about the lack of funding from the trust fund established to carry out community assistance projects for the benefit of the Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali minority communities affected by lead poisoning in Kosovo. We call on the international community to join forces in order to support the fund.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the convening of this meeting and for the informative briefing by Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

We would like to welcome the presence of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku, Ambassador of Kosovo. We also wish to highlight that the most senior officials have expressed their commitment to the dialogue facilitated by the European Union in order to normalize their relations. We emphasize the importance of involving the citizens of both countries, particularly women and young people, in building a shared vision of the future. We welcome the initiatives promoted by UNMIK and UN-Women in that regard.

We believe that, in order to consolidate and sustain peace in Kosovo and stability in the Balkan subregion, the progress made in recent months should allow a

comprehensive implementation of resolution 1244 (1999) and the Brussels Agreement. In the light of those instruments, we believe that the recent legislative initiatives on the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into an army must be carefully evaluated, considering the presence and role of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) in the country, as well as its impact on the process of political dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade.

We underline the importance of respecting and strengthening the rule of law and the trust of citizens in the institutions. In that connection, we highlight the work of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, especially in the area of promoting and protecting human rights. We underscore the need to respect the work and autonomy of the justice system to guarantee access to justice and effective accountability, thereby enabling it to fight effectively against corruption and impunity.

We also emphasize the importance of recognizing ethnic, religious and cultural diversity in order to consolidate the rule of law and make headway on pending issues, such as the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and respect for protected areas of cultural heritage.

On the other hand, we must express our concern about the risk posed to Kosovo and other countries of the subregion by the return of foreign terrorist fighters. The support of the international community is vital in that area, in accordance with the agenda promoted by the Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee.

I would like to conclude by expressing our appreciation for the work carried out by UNMIK, as well as by KFOR, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, in support of building sustainable peace in Kosovo.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): We thank Ambassador Tanin for his briefing just now; we also thank High Representative Mogherini and the European Union for facilitating the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. Those efforts should, in turn, be rewarded with the strong commitment from Serbia and Kosovo, in good faith, towards the normalization of their relations.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands believes that it is high time to recognize Kosovo's considerable progress since 2008. In that context, I will focus on three issues: first, the reporting cycle; secondly, the strategic review; and, thirdly, the rule of law.

First, the current situation in Kosovo clearly allows for a reduction of the Secretary-General's reporting cycle. We also encourage a shift of format from briefings to closed consultations. The Council set a welcome example by reducing the frequency of our discussions to twice a year. We call upon the Secretary-General to adjust his reporting cycle accordingly.

Secondly, we believe that it is possible for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to downscale its operations. We therefore call once more for a strategic review of UNMIK, in coordination with all the relevant actors. Such a review should align the Mission to the situation on the ground.

My third and final point is on the rule of law. We appreciate Kosovo's progress in strengthening its judiciary. We welcome the launch of Justice 2020 and the functional review. Those are positive examples of efforts to increase performance and accountability. However, political will and the efforts of all strata of Kosovar society remain necessary to push forward in strengthening the rule of law and improving the daily lives of citizens. High-profile cases must be treated with the utmost scrutiny and precision. We encourage Kosovo to keep reforming its judiciary. Kosovo needs to embrace its responsibilities and ensure accountability at the national level, as we encourage the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo to hand over responsibilities to Kosovar authorities.

In conclusion, Kosovo has come a long way since its independence 10 years ago. We encourage Kosovo to keep building up its institutions. We have full faith in its ability to handle its affairs as a sovereign nation.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): At the outset, let me thank Special Representative Tanin for his presence and briefing today. I would also like to thank First Deputy Prime Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku for their statements before the Council.

Poland watches the developments in Kosovo closely and we are reassured that the situation on the ground is calm, and while it may be far from perfect, it certainly does not warrant a quarterly cycle of reporting. We express a sentiment shared by other Council members when we say that there is clearly no factual justification for this frequency.

As concerns the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Poland would like to reiterate our call for a strategic review of the Mission. We are happy to see that this initiative has been taken up by other members of the Council. It has been years since a strategic review was last conducted, and it is apparent that circumstances have changed. A fresh assessment of the Mission's comparative advantage vis-à-vis other international presences in Kosovo is obviously needed. The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) has recently undergone a substantial refocusing of its mandate, reflecting the growing capacity of the host country to handle its own affairs — and so, in our view, should UNMIK.

Having recognized Kosovo, I will stick to more general remarks made from the point of view of an interested observer. Looking at the overall picture in Kosovo, we see work in progress. To be sure, much work still remains to be done, but progress is equally apparent. Whether problems may exist internally or bilaterally, none of this is outside the competence of a self-reliant independent State with functioning institutions, supported by the true engagement of its political elites.

We commend the effort of both leaders, from Belgrade and Pristina, to continue the European Union-facilitated dialogue and call on them to show consistent commitment to reaching a legally binding agreement on the comprehensive normalization of relations. The enlargement perspective set out in the strategy for the Western Balkans is feasible if enough energy is invested in going forward, rather than concentrating on the past.

Much work remains to be done in strengthening the rule of law in Kosovo. Although a lot has already been achieved, more needs to be done to combat corruption and organized crime so that the basic trust of the citizens in the State is restored and maintained.

Let me conclude with the same words that we used to conclude our statement in this Chamber six months ago (see S/PV.8254), as they remain valid. Poland regards Kosovo as being capable of managing its own future and realizing its potential within the shared framework of European values. We are ready to extend our assistance in that effort and share our experiences, as we have done so far.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for the quality of his briefing. We also welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku of Kosovo.

My country welcomes the great progress that has been made in Kosovo in recent years in the political, security and economic spheres, thanks to the support of the international community and the outstanding work of the UNMIK staff in supporting the Government's efforts for reconciliation among the various communities and a return to peace and stability in the country. My country also welcomes the full commitment of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo to the consolidation of multi-ethnic, transparent and democratic institutions in the country since 2008. That commitment has strongly contributed to the return to institutional normalcy and stability, as evidenced by the successful organization of municipal elections on 22 October and 19 November 2017.

My delegation notes with satisfaction the ratification in March by the Parliament of Kosovo of the bilateral agreement on the demarcation of the border between Kosovo and Montenegro, which was signed in September 2015. However, it remains concerned about the paucity of progress in the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. Côte d'Ivoire therefore urges those two countries to overcome their differences and give priority to cooperation, particularly within the framework of the Central European Free Trade Agreement, in order to stimulate their economic development.

On the security front, my delegation welcomes the efforts that have been made by the Kosovo Force (KFOR) since 1999 to contribute to the maintenance of a safe and secure environment in Kosovo and ensure the free movement of goods and persons. My country notes with regret the slow progress of the investigations into the murder on 16 January of Mr. Oliver Ivanović, the leader of the civic initiative "Serbia, democracy, justice". It therefore encourages the Kosovar authorities to take all appropriate measures to ensure that the perpetrators of that crime are apprehended and brought before the competent courts.

We take this occasion to welcome the indictment by the Kosovo Specialist Prosecutor's Office on

5 October of seven individuals planning terrorist attacks in Serb-majority areas and against KFOR troops. Furthermore, Côte d'Ivoire reiterates its call for the rapid operationalization of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, which will undoubtedly contribute to the easing and relaxation of the sociopolitical climate.

My country would like to see the continuation of high-level meetings between the political authorities of Pristina and Belgrade, under the leadership of Ms. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in order to significantly advance reconciliation and a final settlement of the Kosovo issue. Those meetings, in addition to the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, have contributed to the significant progress made in the area of human rights and reconciliation among communities.

In conclusion, my country calls on the international community to make a significant contribution to the trust fund to support the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo.

Mr. Vaverka (Sweden): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin for his briefing, and welcome Foreign Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku to the Council Chamber today.

Today's briefing will be Sweden's last meeting on Kosovo during our current tenure as a member of the Council. During these two years, despite challenges, important steps have been taken by Pristina and Belgrade to normalize relations and advance on their respective European Union (EU) tracks.

The future of both Serbia and Kosovo clearly lies in the European Union. The EU integration process is the most important driver of positive change and necessary reforms in the Western Balkans. We welcome the continued engagement of Pristina and Belgrade in the EU-facilitated dialogue for the normalization of relations. Full normalization is vital to a stable, peaceful and prosperous Western Balkans, and a comprehensive and legally-binding agreement must be reached as soon as possible.

Pristina and Belgrade should implement their commitments and pursue the dialogue process with constructive engagement and dedication. Important achievements, such as the integration of Kosovo Serb judges and prosecutors into Kosovo's judicial system last year, should serve as an inspiration for further progress.

The developments in the Western Balkans have a direct influence on the rest of Europe. The European Union has therefore invested heavily in the stability and prosperity of that region, both politically and financially. It is essential that the status issue not hamper the European perspective for the two countries. The normalization of Kosovo in an international context, including its membership in international organizations, must be allowed to move forward. We encourage the Government and the opposition of Kosovo to accelerate work with the necessary reforms, including the fight against corruption and organized crime, in order to advance further on the EU path.

The United Nations and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) have undoubtedly made invaluable contributions to bringing us to where we are today. Present challenges in Kosovo are, however, better dealt with in the framework of the EU integration process, including in close cooperation with the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. The handover of responsibilities from UNMIK to the local authorities should continue.

UNMIK's efforts should instead be refocused so that the means deployed by the United Nations are better tailored to the situation on the ground. To that end, we would welcome a strategic review of the Mission in due course. Given the progress made in Kosovo, the current reporting cycle to the Security Council should also be adjusted to six months to better reflect the realities on the ground. That would entail two reports from the Secretary-General a year.

Since 1999, Sweden has contributed militarily, economically and politically to the stability and prosperity of Kosovo. Our political support, which is also demonstrated through our bilateral development cooperation, will continue, with a clear focus on supporting Kosovo's EU integration.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): I would like to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his comprehensive briefing on the latest developments in Kosovo. I also welcome the presence of Mr. Dačić, Serbian First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, at today's meeting and

thank him for his remarks. I also thank Ambassador Vlora Çitaku for her statement.

Our position on the issue at hand has always been consistent and clear. We would like to reaffirm our support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia and the peaceful and amicable resolution of all outstanding issues between Belgrade and Pristina in accordance with the Brussels Agreement. We also welcome the ongoing efforts made by the European Union in facilitating dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo, as well as in advancing peace and stability in the region.

In that regard, we are encouraged by the continued engagement of Belgrade and Pristina in the European Union-facilitated dialogue on the normalization of relations. We are also encouraged by their determination and commitment to resolve outstanding issues through dialogue and call on both sides to remain engaged in the process.

The ongoing efforts being made to operationalize an integrated Kosovo judiciary is a welcome step. However, we are concerned about the slow progress on the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo. We therefore encourage the implementation of all existing agreements in accordance with the Brussels Agreement.

We also take note of the ongoing discussion by both sides on the territorial delineation as part of a comprehensive agreement on the normalization of relations. It is our hope that leaders in both Belgrade and Pristina will continue to engage in dialogue and maintain a positive and constructive spirit with a view to addressing outstanding issues and disagreements through peaceful means. That demands that both sides refrain from actions and statements that could cause ethnic discord and exert efforts to create an atmosphere of trust and confidence conducive to dialogue that also addresses the interests of all segments of the population.

Ethiopia fully supports the work that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo has been undertaking in discharging its mandate in line with resolution 1244 (1999). Its engagement and support in promoting intercommunity reconciliation and confidence-building measures in the reporting period are commendable.

It is our hope that UNMIK will continue to promote political dialogue and strengthen community reconciliation, as well as ensuring security and stability in Kosovo and the region. We also recognize the significant role of the European Union on matters concerning Kosovo and commend the European Union Rule of Law Mission and the Kosovo Force for their valuable contribution in Kosovo in the area of the rule of law and security.

In conclusion, I would like to state that the security and stability of Kosovo and the region will ultimately be ensured once there is political will and resolve on the part of both sides. In that respect, we once again encourage both parties to remain committed to dialogue and negotiation with a view to finding a mutually acceptable solution.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I, too, would like to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku, Ambassador of Kosovo to the United States of America, for their briefings. I would like to very respectfully recall that, in accordance with the working methods of the Security Council, such statements should not exceed 15 minutes, as recalled in paragraph 56 of note S/2017/507. In the light of the situation described by the Special Representative and the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/981), I will briefly underline three points.

The first concerns the mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Notable efforts have been made to promote security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo and the region. That work deserves to be commended. France particularly welcomes UNMIK's activities in bringing together communities and in promoting the women, peace and security agenda in cooperation with UN-Women. However, as has been underlined by several members at previous meetings and again today, we must continue to be attentive to the issue of refocusing UNMIK's actions nearly 20 years after the adoption of resolution 1244 (1999), taking into account the situation on the ground, the performance of that peacekeeping operation and the initiatives led by other regional and international actors. I am thinking in particular of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX).

Secondly, the normalization of relations between Pristina and Belgrade also depends on the dialogue between the two leaders conducted under the auspices

of the European Union. In that regard, we welcome the commitment of Ms. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the most recent meeting held in Brussels on Thursday, 8 November.

France calls on both sides to show a spirit of compromise and political will. We encourage the policymakers of both States to be up to the circumstances and to create the conditions for an agreement, which would be an essential step in the long-term stabilization of the Western Balkans and in moving towards the European perspective.

Finally, my third point concerns the European future of Kosovo and Serbia, which was clarified last March in the European Union's strategy for the Western Balkans. In view of the merits at the heart of the European project, we emphasize the importance of the reforms needed to consolidate and to strengthen the rule of law. In Kosovo, EULEX contributes to that objective by focusing on the effectiveness, ethics and the multi-ethnic character of Kosovo's justice system. However, the primary responsibility lies, of course, with the policymakers.

As we commemorate the centenary of the end of the Great War, a spirit of reconciliation must prevail. We hope that Belgrade and Pristina will be able to move in that direction and reach an agreement on normalizing their relations.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin by thanking Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing on the progress made in recent months in Kosovo. I would also like to thank Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku, Ambassador of Kosovo to the United States of America, for their interventions, which I welcome.

My delegation takes note of the resumption of the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina on 18 July and separate talks with Ms. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in Brussels on 7 September. We urge the parties to continue the talks to promote the normalization of relations, since ensuring security and stability in Kosovo requires the commitment of both parties to continuing the dialogue. We therefore encourage them to continue to step up their efforts towards achieving stability on the ground, while respecting the implementation of the agreements reached.

Likewise, we note the possible agreement on territorial adjustments on which the parties are working in view of their commitment to reaching a final agreement on Kosovo. We recall that the aforementioned agreement should not only be in line with international laws but also address all the concerns of the various communities, as well as the disagreements that may arise among them. In that regard, we encourage the parties to continue to cooperate peacefully, to promote political dialogue and respect for human rights, as established in the Charter of the United Nations, and to address their differences through direct, fair and inclusive negotiations in order to find a lasting solution acceptable to all parties.

We note with concern the decision of Pristina to increase taxes on products imported from Serbia. That decision does nothing but undermine regional cooperation, increase tensions and damage overall trust among the various communities. We therefore urge the parties to step up their efforts to improve regional cooperation and the rule of law, and to promote development, peace and security in Kosovo, while safeguarding the good relations of trust among the communities there. In that regard, we call on the competent authorities to clarify as soon as possible the circumstances surrounding the murder of Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanović in January.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea reaffirms its respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia and deems the legitimate Serbian concerns on the question of Kosovo to be justified. We thank Serbia for its continued efforts to seek a peaceful and inclusive solution to the question of Kosovo.

Finally, we commend the excellent work that UNMIK is doing on the ground and the support that it provides to all of the communities in Kosovo and the regional and international actors, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, in order to fulfil the mandates of resolution 1244 (1999), which is the legal basis for a just solution in Kosovo.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

China thanks Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing. We support the Special Representative in leading UNMIK's implementation of its mandate. I also welcome the presence of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, at this meeting and thank him for his briefing. I also take note of the statement delivered by Ms. Çitaku.

At present, the security situation in Kosovo is stable on the whole, but it still faces some complexities. Resolution 1244 (1999) is an important legal basis for resolving the Kosovo issue. All parties should, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and within the framework of the relevant resolutions, reach a solution that is acceptable to all through dialogue and negotiation.

China respects Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, understands Serbia's legitimate concerns on the Kosovo issue and appreciates Serbia's efforts to seek a political solution to the Kosovo issue. China welcomes the commitments made by Belgrade and Pristina to promoting the normalization of bilateral relations through dialogue and consultation. We also welcome the constructive efforts of both parties to implement the agreements already reached, gradually build mutual trust and continue to create conditions conducive to reaching a comprehensive and lasting solution.

It is in the fundamental interests of all of the ethnic groups in Kosovo to achieve reconciliation and common development, which in turn will contribute to peace, stability and prosperity in the Balkans. It is hoped that all parties concerned will put the well-being of the people first, protect the legitimate rights and interests of all ethnic groups, promote socioeconomic development and avoid words or actions that might lead to escalating tensions.

While the Council should remain seized with the Kosovo issue, the international community should play a constructive role in promoting a proper solution. We hope that UNMIK will maintain its coordination with the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Kosovo Force and others in a joint effort to improve the situation in Kosovo and promote the due settlement of the Kosovo issue.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 1.35 p.m.